



Environmental NGO joint statement (CCB, Oceana and WWF) at HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on the Baltic Sea Action Plan

Copenhagen, Denmark 3 October 2013

Dear Ministers, High-level representatives, friends

On behalf of the environmental NGO observers to HELCOM, we Coalition Clean Baltic, Oceana and WWF appreciate the opportunity to address this Ministerial Meeting focused upon the review of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan. As you know, we welcomed HELCOM's initiative and ambition in 2007 to deliver wide-scale and decisive actions necessary to achieve a good environmental status for the Baltic Sea by 2021.

In practice, however, despite the high ambitions and the frequent reference to the innovative approach of this action plan, six years after its signing it has yet to deliver upon its promise. Countries are lagging far behind on their National Implementation Programmes. Concerted initiatives and concrete actions to achieve a sufficient reduction of nutrient input from agriculture, to control the spread of hazardous substances, reduce the impacts from fisheries and to protect biodiversity are still largely lacking. In other words, the real work to deliver the BSAP is yet to be done, a fact which we believe should be at the core of discussions today. Importantly, this challenge – the lack of implementation as well as ambition - is an opinion that is shared by some contracting parties not simply the environmental NGOs.

It has been further highlighted that the ministerial statement you will soon agree to, will likely be much less ambitious than the original BSAP. Thus, there is a danger that the BSAP is turning into an empty paper. Should the BSAP fail, it will prove devastating for not only the Baltic Sea environment, but undermine the entire basis for prosperous development in the region. This current non-action is not only jeopardizing the BSAP but the timely implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the realization of other EU policies that rely on effective regional coordination such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the Water Framework Directive and expected future legislation on Maritime Spatial Planning.

We are aware that that the political situation in countries is making the setting and follow through of ambitious plans increasingly difficult. Which is why we realize your position as environment ministers is not an easy one – as in many cases the pressures are coming from elsewhere. This is why we believe your counterparts from other ministries – agriculture, fisheries, finance, enterprise, etc. ought to be meaningfully engaged in this discussion which is why we have urged their support of your strong leadership at this meeting as well as their continued commitment to work with you closely on these issues going forward. It is clear that a much more integrated approach to the management of the Baltic Sea, involving all relevant ministries and sectors, is urgently needed in order to secure sustainable economic and social development in the region.

Importantly, there is an increasing body of evidence which demonstrates the case for action is not simply environmental. A recent report produced by the Boston Consulting Group, *Turning Adversity into Opportunity* shows that measures to restore the health of the Baltic Sea could bring 550,000 jobs and €32 billion Euros in annual value added to the region by 2030. Saving the Baltic Sea is therefore of interest for not only the environment itself, but for the development of the entire region. This study is complemented by the BalticSTERN report which states that the economic benefits of reaching the BSAP targets are in the magnitude of one billion Euroes per year.

So, we and other citizens of the Baltic Sea region can rightfully ask: what is holding you back? The recovery of the Baltic Sea should be the one issue that we all agree on.

Given these clear signals about the environmental and economic case for action, and the increasing awareness and engagement of the general public in demanding action to save the Sea, we urge you ministers and your entire governments to show strong leadership and agree to implement the actions your countries have already committed to – as well as identify additional actions where needed.

We furthermore urge you to use your time wisely today to discuss and answer the following key questions:

- What concrete steps will you take to ensure the successful implementation of the BSAP?
- How will you secure effective cooperation across all contracting parties, recognizing that costs and benefits must be shared in an equitable manner in order to reach the BSAP and that financial support must be identified?
- How will you address the present failures in implementation, cooperate to address these and agree upon an ambitious but realistic plan to set the Baltic Sea Action Plan back on track?

Specifically, we urge your commitment to agree upon stronger actions to:

- Apply nutrient-balanced fertilization practices on farmland in accordance with Helcom Annex III for all future investments for agricultural production should at least meet a requirement of maximum Nitrogen-surplus of 50 kg N/ha/year.
- BSAP to "establish a list of Hot Spots identifying existing installations for the intensive rearing of cattle, poultry and pigs not fulfilling the requirements in the revised Annex III of the Helsinki Convention", has, in spite of two Ministerial decisions, not been implemented.
- Ensuring comprehensive management plans for marine protected areas, regulating unsustainable activities, like bottom trawling inside protected areas, which are threatening natural values and resources.
- Taking the necessary steps to reduce the negative impacts from fisheries by taking steps to address the insufficient selectivity that causes low survival of undersize cod in cod bottom-trawling which is jeopardizing the development of sustainable and natural cod stocks
- Prioritize development and implementation of fisheries management plans, including full closures, within existing protected areas
- Actively secure the conservation at least ten endangered/threatened wild salmon river populations in the Baltic Sea region as well as the reintroduction of native Baltic Sea salmon in at least four potential salmon rivers, which is today not being sufficiently addressed nor implemented.

Importantly, we should also remember the worsening of the eutrophication because of climate change effects, have not been taken into account when calculating Maximum Allowable Nutrient Input to the Baltic Sea. Which is why rather than looking to decrease the ambitious nature of the nutrient reduction targets, they should actually be strengthened.

The Baltic Sea belongs to us all and should be a source of enjoyment, beauty and sustainable use for generations to come. We stand ready to support you in our collective outreach work around the region to deliver the BSAP and thus its vision of *“a healthy Baltic Sea, with diverse biological components functioning in balance, resulting in a good ecological status and supporting a wide range of sustainable human, economic and social activities,”* by 2021 at the latest.

And finally, you should also be aware of the strong public support you have from Baltic region citizens, to decide on powerful actions to restore the Baltic Sea environment. The Race for the Baltic campaign this summer, will inform you more on these aspects asking you to show strong leadership and agree to implement actions speedy, that can make a real difference the coming years.